

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Joon OH  
Chairman, United Nations Disarmament Commission (2006)

First Committee of the General Assembly

Interactive Dialogue and Thematic Discussion on Disarmament Machinery

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Thank you, Madam Chair.

1. I am grateful for this opportunity to share with you and the First Committee my thoughts based on my experience as Chairman of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) this year.

*Background to and Preparation Stage of the UNDC 2006 Substantive Session*

Madam Chair,

2. The UNDC substantive session in 2006 was held against the backdrop of a continuing stalemate in the international disarmament process, as evidenced by the failure of the 2005 NPT Review Conference to produce a final document, the failure of the 2005 World Summit to include disarmament in its Outcome Document, and the lack of progress in the Conference on Disarmament. The mere fact that the UNDC was able to meet in a substantive session after three years of hiatus must be considered a relief, if not a cause for celebration.

3. The substantive session meeting in April was the first phase of the three-year cycle of the UNDC substantive session. The agenda items to be discussed during the three-year period, which were agreed at the organizational session in December 2005, are 1) recommendations for achieving the objectives of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and 2) practical confidence-building

measures in the field of conventional weapons. That organizational meeting also agreed to deliberations on measures for improving the effectiveness of the Commission's methods of work at the 2006 session. This breakthrough agreement on an agenda came as a result of a series of informal consultations conducted by my predecessor, Ambassador Sylvester Rowe.

### *Bureau and Organization*

4. Even after we agreed the agenda, the preparations for the substantive session did not go very quickly. I was elected the new Chairman only a month before the meeting, and the whole bureau was not elected until 17 April, seven days after the session began.

5. The UNDC 2006 established a committee of the whole and two working groups to deal with the two substantive items on the agenda. Working Group I, on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, was chaired by Mr. Jean-Francois Zinsou of Benin, while Working Group II, on conventional arms, was led by Mr. Carlos Duarte of Brazil. The issue of improvement of working methods was handled at the plenary, and Ambassador Sylvester Rowe played the role of coordinator or Friend of the Chair, which was instrumental in facilitating the process of consensus-building.

### *Result and Evaluation*

Madam Chair,

6. One clear lesson from the experience of this year's UNDC meeting is that successful conduct of such meetings requires the early formation of a Bureau and working groups so that they have adequate time to prepare. In recognition of this, during our meeting the UNDC reaffirmed the necessity of electing the Bureau members three months before the start of its new substantive session.

7. Nevertheless, I am glad to report that despite our slow start, we were able to make some progress at this UNDC session. In my view, the efforts we made were meaningful in three respects.

8. First, it is worth reiterating the importance of the efforts to accommodate the interests of all stakeholders. As I noted earlier, the UNDC was able to meet this year because we agreed on a comprehensive agenda comprising issues of concern to everyone. Needless to say, no negotiation would produce results without full and willing participation by all players.

9. Second, we agreed a set of measures to improve the working methods of the Commission. Considering the dampened atmosphere of recent disarmament negotiations, the agreement by consensus on this issue was no meagre achievement. While opinion might be divided as to how much the Commission needs to change its current working methods, there was broad agreement that making the Council more effective, efficient and relevant serves everyone's interests. I am very grateful for the spirit of cooperation and flexibility among Member States and hope that such a spirit will continue for the next UNDC session and beyond.

10. Third, on the two substantive agenda items, although neither Working Group agreed on a working paper for future deliberations, I believe that each established a strong basis on which to continue its work in 2007 and 2008. We could have achieved more, but even modest progress at this point is a welcome development.

11. In conclusion, I would like to thank all the Member States for their cooperative and constructive efforts. I hope that the renewed spirit of cooperation can be carried forward to this Committee's work on disarmament, and to the disarmament community as a whole.

Thank you